FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

RESIDENT CANADA GEESE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT AT THE WASHINGTON AQUEDUCT FACILITIES, WASHINGTON, DC

1. NAME OF ACTION: Resident Canada Geese Damage Management at the Washington Aqueduct Facilities, Washington, D.C.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The Washington Aqueduct (WA), a Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District, owns and operates the Dalecarlia and the McMillan Water Treatment Plants, the Dalecarlia Reservoir, the McMillan Reservoir and the Georgetown Reservoir to serve potable water needs of over one million residents of the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. In recent years, the numbers of resident Canada geese that nest and/or reside predominantly within WA facilities have undergone dramatic population growth and have increased to the levels that are increasingly coming into conflict with people and causing personal and public property damage. WA has proposed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) that Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) approach be used to manage, reduce and eliminate damage resulting from conflicts with resident Canada geese population at its facilities. IWDM is a comprehensive approach consisting of combination of non-lethal and lethal management techniques used to keep the resident Canada geese population in control and avoid associated problems. Consistent with the Wildlife Services (WS) of the US Department of Agriculture, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources resident Canada geese management policy, nonlethal methods will be given first consideration in formulation of each damage management strategy, and will be implemented when practical and effective before implementing lethal methods.

The philosophy behind IWDM is to implement the best combination of effective management methods in a cost-effective manner while minimizing potentially harmful effects on humans, target and non-target species, and the environment. Depending upon the circumstances of specific damage problem, IWDM may incorporate cultural practices (such as feeding ban), habitat modifications, animal behavior modification (i.e., scaring), removal of individual disrupting animals, and local population reduction, or any combination of these preventive and corrective actions. As with most wildlife problems, an integrated approach using a combination of tools will be the best way to deal with the resident Canada geese depredation and other conflicts.

A logical annual sequence would include the following actions: Physical exclusion (fencing) will be continued throughout the year. Egg addling/oiling will occur in late March through April of each year. Resident Canada geese round-ups using panel nets or drive traps to capture resident Canada geese will be conducted from mid-June thru mid-July, dependent upon the exact time of the molt, weather conditions, responsiveness of the resident geese, and availability of WS staff. Geese will only be live captured on overcast days and early in the mornings to keep the birds from becoming overly stressed due to warm temperatures. If necessary, additional resident geese will be live captured with rocket nets while they feed on baited areas in late July until the August 21 deadline. Once live captured, adult resident geese will be placed in properly ventilated transportation crates for transportation to a certified processor. The processor will euthanize the geese in accordance with American Veterinary Medical Association methods as well as the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia policies.

This general sequence will be followed each year beginning 2009 until the objective level of less than a dozen resident Canada geese per facility is reached. However, the choice and the sequence

of methods will likely change from year to year depending on population level, location and overall effectiveness of control measures. Certainly, as we progress towards achieving the population objective, there will be less need for lethal control methods. Control methods used will be evaluated annually to determine effectiveness in relationship to achieving the program's objectives.

The Washington Aqueduct's NEPA coordinator will monitor the program annually and collect information on effectiveness of various control techniques used; number and age class of birds removed, and document the results to refine control measures. The collected information will be evaluated to determine the next year's sequence and/or types of control measures.

3. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION: The "no action" alternative consists of doing nothing and maintaining the status quo at the Washington Aqueduct facilities. The "no action" alternative is a "no management" alternative and there would be no control program or actions at the WA facilities to mitigate damage and conflicts associated with the resident Canada geese. The resident Canada geese population would continue to reproduce and grow unchecked. The conflicts with human activities, property damage and problems caused by geese will continue to increase.

The range of the "actions" or alternatives considered included:

Non-lethal Control and Management
Under this alternative, non-lethal management tools, such as physical exclusion through wire grids and perimeter fencing, chase dogs, and goose decoys are used. Physical exclusion methods, such as wire grids and perimeter fencing are recommended for small areas only (two acres or less) due to high installation and maintenance costs. They have been a part of the current program but only for small areas like sedimentation basins. Chase dogs, while used in the past, are a potential non-lethal method of control. However, they have limited effectiveness at the Washington Aqueduct facilities where resident geese can seek refuge on adjacent water bodies. The cost of trained chase dogs that would not affect the visiting public or other wildlife is very high.

Lethal Control and Management
Under this alternative, only lethal management tools are used. Approved lethal methods potentially available to the WA in the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia for population control include public hunting, nests and eggs destruction, and live capture with humane euthanasia by certified processors only. Chemical toxicants and open shooting are not approved methods of lethal control and can not be used under this alternative. Implementation of this alternative would results in a sequence of lethal control actions, beginning with nests/eggs addling/destruction in March and April, followed by capture and euthanasia of molting adults in June and July every year.

A detailed description and evaluation of various options is presented in the Environmental Assessment.

4. ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: Implementation of the proposed action as the preferred alternative would result in no significant adverse impacts on the environment, natural, biological, water and cultural resources. However some reduction in local population of the resident Canada geese may occur. Given the overall abundance of the resident Canada geese in the state of Maryland, the District of Columbia and Atlantic Flyway, these effects will be

insignificant. Analysis in the Environmental Assessment assessed the impacts on the following resources:

- Land Use (No impact)
- Geology and Soils (No impact)
- Topography and Drainage (No impact)
- Climate (No impact)
- Air Quality (No impact)
- Water Resources
    - Surface Water (Minor positive impact)
    - Floodplains (No impact)
    - Groundwater (No impact)
    - Wild and Scenic Rivers (No impact)
- Biological Resources
    - Aquatic Resources (Minor positive impact)
    - Wetlands (No impact)
    - Vegetation (Positive impact)
    - Wildlife Resources (Minor negative impact on the geese population)
    - Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species (No impact)
- Cultural Resources (No impact)
- Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Substances
    - Contaminated Sites (No impact)
    - Hazardous Material Use, Handling, and Storage as well as Hazardous Substance Generation (No impact)
    - Storage Tanks (No impact)
    - Toxic Contaminants (PCBs, Asbestos-Containing Material, Lead-Based Paint) (No impact)
- Infrastructure
    - Traffic, Roadways and Transportation System (No impact)
    - Potable Water (No impact)
    - Sanitary Sewer/Wastewater (No impact)
    - Stormwater Systems (No impact)
    - Solid Waste Management (No impact)
    - Utilities (No impact)
- Socioeconomic
    - Demographics and Environmental Justice (No impact)
    - Economics (No impact)
    - Schools, Recreational Facilities and Children's Safety (No impact)
    - Noise (No impact)
    - Visual and Aesthetic Value (Minor negative impact)

5. CONCLUSION: I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment and find that implementation of the proposed action will not result in significant impacts on natural or human environment. Based on this finding, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. The Washington Aqueduct will proceed with implementation of the preferred alternative, as described in the EA.

6. PUBLIC REVIEW: Copies of the Environmental Assessment can be viewed on WA's website: http://washingtonaqueduct.nab.usace.army.mil/publicNotices.htm. The EA has been

distributed to appropriate Federal, State and local agencies, other groups and representatives. Requests for copies of the EA should be directed to the NEPA Coordinator at the address shown below, at 202-764-2771 or at washingtonaqueduct@usace.army.mil.

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Attn: NEPA Coordinator

Date: April 23, 2009

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